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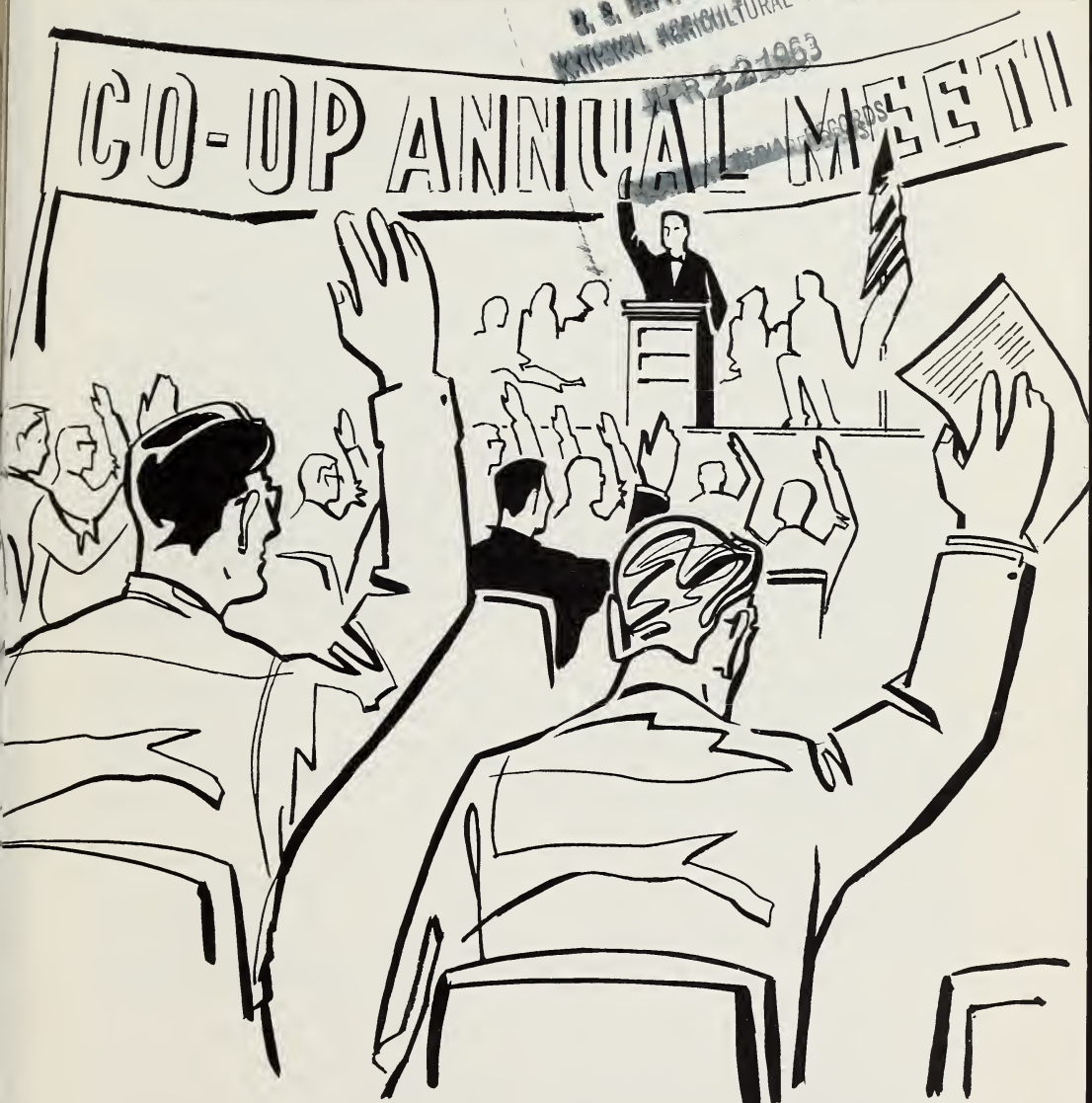
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1963

# Rural Lines

RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ADMINISTRATION • U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



**SPECIAL ISSUE**

**Cooperative Member and Public Relations**



## A Message from the ADMINISTRATOR

The number and similarity of letters and newspaper editorials I receive concerning this or that phase of REA activities indicate the extent of the massive propaganda campaign now being carried out by certain commercial utilities.

To refute these arguments effectively requires that electric borrowers provide the very highest quality of service to their consumers at the lowest possible rates. I am proud to say that this is precisely what practically all our borrowers are doing.

But it also requires positive answers to the many questions raised in point five of our Five Star Member Service Program. Consumer-owned borrowers must constantly ask themselves these questions:

Are we telling the cooperative story fully, not only to our own members but to the general public as well? Do we have an effective newsletter? Are we using the press, radio and TV to get our story across? Are we putting enough effort into improving our annual meetings? How good are co-op relations with their employees? Does each cooperative have a reputation for being a fair and progressive-minded employer? Are we obtaining the support of all segments of society, including organized labor? Are officers, directors, and staff of rural electric and telephone systems active in civic associations and community affairs? Are they taking the lead in promoting rural areas development?

The American people, whether they live in country, city, or suburbs, are fair and just—provided they have all the facts. But they will not accept these facts unless they are presented in the most effective fashion possible. It is my hope that this issue of **RURAL LINES** will assist borrowers in this important effort.

Rural Lines

*Bureau H. Capp*  
Administrator

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Issued monthly by the Rural Electrification Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. Subscribe to this publication from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. Price \$1.50 a year; foreign \$2.00 a year; single copies, 15 cents. Use of funds for the printing of this publication has been approved by the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, January 31, 1960 • Vol. 9, No. 11.

# COOPERATIVE MEMBER AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is an inescapable, integral part of cooperative functioning. In a broad sense, everything a cooperative, its employees its management, and its directors do has a public relations impact.

Both good service and bad service result in good or bad public relations.

Rates have important public relations implications.

Adherence to cooperative principles has a most profound connection with public relations.

Paying capital credits at the earliest possible date is not only one of these inescapable principles but, properly publicized, is the cooperative's most important instrument for stamping it as a nonprofit organization.

Every letter a co-op manager writes, every telephone call he makes, every business or casual conversation in which he participates, affects the overall public relations program and posture of the cooperative. The directors, the management, and the staff of a cooperative are symbols of that cooperative to all those with whom they come in contact.

These are responsibilities which cannot be evaded; they must be faced.

Is there a special need for greater emphasis upon and greater effectiveness in electric public relations at this particular time?

There is. Startling changes have taken place and still are taking place in farm and rural areas, and in the power industry as a whole. In the early days of the rural electrification program, farm and rural area leaders did a pioneering job because they were determined to share in the benefits

of electric light and power—benefits denied them by the profit-oriented commercial utilities.

The momentum of this early leadership, self-sacrifice, and vision gave great thrust to the electric cooperative program. During those early and middle years co-op members were close to the operation and fully aware of its advantages for them.

In many sections of the nation today the characteristics of co-op membership have changed. The availability of electric power has attracted populations from urban to rural areas, and many of these new consumers are on co-op lines. Not all of them, however, are acquainted with co-op principles and the responsibilities of co-op consumer-membership. It is an imperative public relations challenge to indoctrinate these new members with the cooperative philosophy, and motivate them toward full participation in the cooperative program, especially including member responsibility.

In the early and middle years, too, the rural electric cooperative systems and their member-owners often were remote, even isolated, from primary or secondary centers of population.

This situation also has changed. It has been convincingly demonstrated that a healthy and vigorous electric cooperative exercises a strong economic influence in the communities in or contiguous to its service area. As consumer densities on co-op lines have improved, various commercial utilities have sought to move in on the co-ops, and for the cooperatives territorial integrity has become an increasingly important issue. It is vital that the



electric cooperatives have acceptance and understanding support in the urban centers of population where their members do business. This support will be forthcoming, but only if it is consistently developed and fostered by a strong interpretive program of public relations.

The times are no longer propitious for an economic and social line of demarcation between town and country. It's all one nation, all one social structure, all one economy. Electric cooperatives have their legitimate place in this expanding scheme of things. Strong public relations programs are the best weapons available to them for winning and holding the recognition and acceptance which they require.

Loyal, informed, and enthusiastic patrons are the backbone of effective cooperative public relations. Positive, favorable community relations cannot be achieved—at least not to a maximum degree—save through an informed and dedicated membership. In the long view it is the members who have sustained contact with the community, with the general public, and with each other. To remain healthy and do its job a cooperative has need of strong support in all of these quarters.

Member education, then, is an abiding challenge to cooperative public relations. Through informed and enthusiastic members you can develop in the public mind the conviction that your cooperative is a well-run business organization, needed by and useful not only to its membership but to the broader community of which it is a part, and that it contributes directly and importantly to the economic and social health of the whole local society. In so doing, it contributes also to the health and stability of the Nation. Creating and sustaining this image

should be an overall objective of your public relations program.

It is important, too, that cooperative directors and officers actively seek opportunities to help improve and build the community. The cooperative idea is, fundamentally, the negation of isolation. Cooperative officers and directors should be quick to assume leadership and responsibility for constructive community programs. They have the experience; they have the talent; and they have the duty. They need only to seek out the necessary opportunities for service.

Cooperative policies and objectives should be well defined and clearly interpreted, both to the membership and the general public. Above all, ways should be sought to motivate members to tell the co-op story. And that story should be told to positive, not negative, terms. Consider, for example, the constantly recurring and totally erroneous assertion that electric cooperatives pay no taxes. Of course, cooperatives DO pay taxes; a variety of them. So why not get your members talking about the taxes your cooperative *does* pay? And why not make it clear to your membership that the corporate income tax applies to less than 15 percent of U. S. firms? Partnerships and proprietary firms—about 86 percent of the wholesale and retail firms in the United States—pay no business income tax in any form. Nor, actually, do the public utilities, because they pass the cost of tax payments along to their consumers in their rates.

This is only a single example of the urgent need for member education and participation in cooperative public relations programs. There are dozens of similar topics about which members should be clearly informed and about which they should be articulate.

# Newspapers

Obviously, local and county newspapers offer a most important medium for interpretive and public relations effort reflecting your cooperative and its program, but this medium must be used deftly and intelligently if you are not to “wear out your welcome” with the editors. Here are a few basic rules which may help you use your local and State press effectively in telling your co-op story:



*An attractive co-op employee clips a newspaper account of an activity in which her organization was engaged.*

First, cultivate personal cordial contacts with publishers, editors, and reporters. Do not be aggressive, but make sure they know who you are, what you are doing, why you are doing it, what it means to the community, and that you are ready to cooperate with them at any time.

Try to understand the editor's point of view. His interest is extremely broad. He is handling news on a world-wide as well as local level. A new headquarters building may be the most important news in the world for you at the moment, but that doesn't mean it's

equally important to the newspaper editor. So see that he gets *all* the facts in clear, comprehensible, understandable and usable form. Then accept his judgment as to the relative merits of your news in relation to the other news he is handling. Such an attitude will promote a graceful working relationship between you and the editors.

The operations of your cooperative are bound to generate legitimate news from time to time. Try to get this news to your newspapers in timely and appropriate fashion. Where events can be anticipated in advance, type up your copy double-spaced, and see that it reaches the editor sufficiently ahead of time for him to make maximum use of it. Be sure it's news—be factual—don't load your copy with propaganda. This will encourage respect for your material by the editor, who will realize that you're not simply seeking free advertising for your cooperative.

Appropriate subjects for news items include: changes in personnel; cutover of telephone exchange; plans for new buildings or alterations; management and employee training schools; safety methods and records; participation in community improvement projects; storm damage or other emergencies; purchase of new equipment; “way back when” or other human interest stories; announcement of a new REA loan, stressing *what this will mean to the economic health of the community*.

When you invite the press to cover such events as annual meetings, special meetings, tours, demonstrations, etc. . . . don't forget to make appropriate provision for reporters. Advance copies of speeches will be welcome in editorial offices. Fact sheets giving background information will be welcome also. If there are speakers or other participants in your program, have accurate lists of their names and identifications available for reporters.

If reports are to be submitted at a meeting, have copies of the reports available for the press.

In other words, think ahead, and take every step you can to be helpful. In many instances reporters may be working against deadlines, or they may have notes and data reflecting coverage of several other stories still to be written. Coverage of your "event" will be slowed down and rendered less accurate and effective if reporters have to spend time jotting down a lot of figures from a report, or trying to get the correct spelling of names, with appropriate initials and identifications to go with each. In many, many instances you can do all this in advance for the press. And if you do a thorough job, your cooperative public relations program will benefit in at least two ways: (1) press coverage will be more accurate;

and (2) it probably will be more comprehensive, because reporters will have all the facts to refer to when they start to write, and will not be forced to rely upon hasty notes or memory.

In small communities, of course, the editor himself may cover your meeting or special event, and he may represent a weekly rather than a daily newspaper. However, in this matter, what applies to the reporter applies equally to the editor. The main point is to give him all the information he can use, in accurate and usable form, as far in advance as possible. Then arrange for him to interview your principal speakers or participants if he wishes to do so. There may be many questions he will want to ask which will not be included in your program. See to it that he has the opportunity.

## Spot News

From time to time spot news will emerge on the lines of your electric system. These are happenings which cannot be anticipated, such as significant outages, storm damage, etc. It is also possible that heroic or dedicated work by your maintenance or repair crews may turn such events into significant examples of the efficient operation of your system. Spot news has to be handled promptly, but it affords excellent opportunities for good and effective electric cooperative public relations. Cooperation is the operative word in this consideration. See that your newspapers are notified promptly—at *once*—if spot news breaks. Then work with them in supplying background information or any other facts which may contribute to accurate and complete press coverage.

Above all, **DON'T TRY TO COVER UP IF THE NEWS SEEMS TO BE AGAINST YOU.** You have nothing to hide; no operation is perfect. The main thing is to help the newspapers get all the facts correctly, regardless of what they are. In doing this you will convince the press of your sincerity and the sincerity of your membership. If you follow this approach you will win far more in long range prestige and respect than you can possibly lose from a temporary setback. Your program is long range; you're going to be around a while, and so are the newspapers. Your job is to build confidence in your cooperative in the area it serves. You can undo much good work by panicking and trying to cover up a single unpleasant incident.





*This picture was released by the North Central Telephone Cooperative Corporation, Lafayette, Tennessee, to publicize installation of its 5,000th telephone. It shows Will Hall Sullivan, a co-op director, holding the telephone installed in the home of Lewis Butler, a resident of Lafayette.*

## Features

All newspapers welcome features. Usually features are built around people, and the people of your cooperative—your membership—will often generate this kind of material.

You should be alert to spot feature material, and to see that your newspapers are tipped off when you find it. This will call for two-way communication between the membership and the co-op staff, but such two-way communication always should be encouraged and promoted as a basic matter of cooperative policy. Fundamentally, people are interested in activities, problems, and accomplishments or expe-

riences of other people. Newspaper editors are well aware of this, which explains why good feature material is so welcome in the editorial office.

By and large, newspapers prefer to work up and write feature material themselves. In most cases all you'll have to do is provide the basic facts and cooperate with editors or reports in their own development of the stories. In general terms the basis for a feature article may be found in anything that is new, different, unusual, significant, or amusing. It doesn't have to have the acidity of the "man bites dog" definition of news. It is sufficient for a feature to instruct or entertain.

# Photographs Can Tell Your Story

Photographs, of course, play an important role in modern journalism. You will want to facilitate in every way you can adequate photographic coverage of co-op news and features by your local and State press. In most cases, this will mean cooperating with newspaper photographers and seeing to it that they have full opportunity to make all the pictures they need. There may be occasions, however, when you will find it useful to have certain photographs made yourself, for distribution to the press. Local circumstances will

decide; the principal point is that you keep pictures in mind as an important part of your press coverage, and plan accordingly. If you can't make professional grade photographs yourself, be sure a professional photographer will be available when you need him.

"Pictures can tell your story" best if they are action shots . . . if they show people working in the office or on the lines, paying bills, and the like. Needless to say, the people should be fully and correctly identified, and only 8 x 10 glossy prints should be submitted.

## Use Display Advertising

It is entirely appropriate for an electric cooperative to purchase space for the presentation of special announcements, reports, etc. Even though operating on a non-profit basis, an electric cooperative is a business operation, and the use of paid advertising space is a standard business procedure. As a matter of fact, in the case of an electric co-op, the judicious use of display space in newspapers may have an advantage beyond its immediate purpose of placing information before the public. Use of display space will tend to tie the cooperative more closely in with the business community in the public mind—to strengthen its image as a business along with other businesses—

and that in itself is a desirable objective. Always, overall cooperative policies and procedures should seek to minimize isolation, and promote public understanding and acceptance of the cooperative as a vital and contributing force in the business and social life of the community.

Many statewide associations produce display material, including mats, that can be used almost as is. Several cooperatives can join together to produce more professional and cheaper displays. Individual cooperatives can often produce, in collaboration with the local or county newspaper, a special section to celebrate an anniversary, completion of a new building, or other event.

There are many ways of reaching out "to tell the co-op story." One of the simplest, cheapest, and most effective was used last year by Adams Electric Cooperative at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It queried the local community service clubs, F.F.A. chapters, 4-H groups and other associations for permission to address them on the principles and activity of the cooperative. It followed this up by placing a box notice in its newsletter offering to present its program free before any group. The results have been gratifying. The cooperative has now received scores of requests for its representatives to address such groups.



*Manager Janie Hall uses a pointer and blow-up of an operating report to explain the financial condition of the Yorkville Telephone Cooperative, Yorkville, Tennessee, to its member-subscribers at a recent annual meeting.*

## Annual Meetings

Your annual meeting probably is the most important event on your cooperative calendar.

Since your board and staff derive their authority from the membership, members should be accurately, fully, and interestingly informed about the cooperative's activities so that they can act intelligently at the annual meeting.

Try to make your annual meeting an event to which your members will look forward with pleasant anticipation.

Publicity is an important tool in insuring the success of your annual meeting. It is axiomatic that "there always is that ten percent who don't get the word!" Be thoughtful of that ten percent of your membership, and see to it that they do get the word.

In planning your annual meeting, start at least three months in advance, choose a theme to carry your story, pace your effort, employ media successively until you have integrated them all in your program, and build to a climax. That climax should be saturation of your membership with the conviction that they can't afford to miss the meeting.

The essential tool is a predetermined schedule that lists every step—that describes who does what at a particular time right until the end of the meeting.

Another essential element is convincing the members that they will be called upon to make important decisions at the meeting. And the way to do that is to make sure that there are actually important issues on which they



can vote. The Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation at Lenoir, North Carolina, added substance to its recent annual meeting by presenting resolutions for its membership to vote upon. Subjects included capital credits, territorial protection, area development, and power supply—all based on local conditions.

A telephone campaign a few days before the meeting is a good idea to put a final hop into the affair. The list of telephone numbers may be divided up among the Minutemen, or among other active members. On occasion, an electric cooperative has paid members to make these last-minute calls.

Prizes are all right, but they are no substitute for real planning and an all-out effort prior to the event. Use posters, blown-up graphs, and exhibits. Make the meeting *look* like a major event as well as being one.

Reports should be clear and comprehensive, but as brief as possible. Emphasize the theme that your cooperative is a *vigorous* organization, and that it is going places. People are not going to be very interested in a static organization or a static program.

Entertainment has a proper place in the program. Plan it carefully for quality rather than quantity.

One sure way to reach parents is through the children. Some simple pageant—the discovery, development, and use of electric power—in which children up to teen age can participate, is worth considering. Writing and staging might be tied in with local school programs. Try to use as big a cast as possible. For every child on the stage you should have half a dozen people in the audience.

Follow up the annual meeting by fully publicizing the important decisions taken and plans for the future.

Most of the considerations which apply to the annual meeting may also be applied to District meetings, but in a lower key. Annual picnics and neighborhood information meetings may be usefully employed under the proper circumstances. A thing to remember, however, is that too many meetings may well defeat rather than advance your purpose. It is better to stage one bang-up, well attended, and meaningful meeting than half a dozen poorly attended and ineffective gatherings. Most people have limited time available from the immediate and insistent demands of their work or social commitments. If you claim a portion of this time, you must offer them something substantially rewarding in return.

Any cooperative can hold a good annual meeting (unless a blizzard interferes) if it wants to badly enough. The Yorkville Telephone Cooperative at Yorkville, Tennessee, began planning for its recent meeting four or five months in advance. It spent money to publicize the dinner meeting—and paid for all the dinners. It saw to it that the hall was well decorated, and got Boy Scouts to handle traffic and parking problems. It used imagination: the first switchboard operator (hired in 1906, when the company had 8 subscribers) was introduced to the gathering; all talks were timed with a stopwatch; and manager Janie Hall, using pointer and blown-up graphs, showed progress made during the year. With only 1,388 subscribers, 500 persons attended the annual meeting—and enjoyed every minute of it.

Careful planning, a series of notices, an extensive list of door prizes, and competition for every directorship were some of the factors that helped make a success of the tenth annual meeting held by the Mid Century Telephone Cooperative at Canton, Illinois. The final highlight was cutting of the birthday cake.





*Annual meetings of the Sioux Valley Empire Electric Association at Colman, South Dakota, are well attended, as this picture shows.*

Slides and tape recordings highlighted a recent annual meeting held by the Clearfield Electric Cooperative at Clearfield, Pennsylvania. The pictures were taken by a candid camera using color film during several months previously; they showed employees in the field and in the office; speaking parts were captured by a tape recorder at a time and place convenient to the 17 persons who were interviewed. The recordings were amplified over the loud speaker system of the high school where the meeting was held.

Obviously, there is much more to be said about annual meetings. One document which says some of it is an eight-page special supplement to the March

1962 issue of the *Power Use Bulletin*, published monthly by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, 2000 Florida Avenue, N. W., Washington 9, D. C. A comprehensive *Annual Meeting Guide*, dated February 1961, is available from Midland Cooperatives, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Additional material on annual meetings and many other public relations subjects may be obtained from the Cooperative League of the U. S. A., 343 South Dearborn Street, Chicago 4, Illinois, and Farmer Cooperative Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. FCS regularly issues a catalog of its publications; single copies are available without charge.

## Radio and TV

In order to protect and retain its franchise, every radio or television station must devote a reasonable amount of air time to non-commercial programs of an informative, educational, religious, or cultural nature. This "time" is designed to serve the public interest by promoting the health and moral stability of the community.

As your cooperative is a nonprofit organization owned, controlled, and

serving a solid block of local or area citizens, and decidedly dedicated to community improvement, you may legitimately expect that the activities of your cooperative will be reflected in the public service programing of your local or area radio and television stations. This, however, will not happen without intelligent and effective action on your part. There is much competition for this public service time from

churches, schools, municipal bodies, and many other types of organizations. Their claims are legitimate, too. Therefore, if your cooperative public relations program is to get its share of the radio-television pie, you must have something attractive to offer, and you must go about offering it in a manner which will be understood by and acceptable to the stations involved.

Here are a few practical suggestions for the effective use of radio and television in your public relations program.

1. Make personal contact with station managers, program directors, farm directors (if any), and other station personnel. Acquaint yourself with how the station operates, its network affiliation if any, the scope and capacity of its staff; how much time it has available for the origination of local programs, and where those time slots are. You can't talk intelligently to a program director unless you have some understanding of the conditions under which he operates and the facilities he has for cooperating with you.

2. Explain the co-op story; leave explanatory literature (which may or may not be read!) and make it clear that qualified members of your board, staff or membership are available for

interviews or discussions of subjects of interest and importance to the community. **DON'T LIMIT THEIR PARTICIPATION TO COOPERATIVE MATTERS ONLY.** After all, your directors and members participate in community activities at all levels. Many of them will be equipped to discuss subjects remote from the operations of your cooperative. Your objective should be to get them on programs and identified with your cooperative, regardless of the subjects discussed.

3. Try to suggest a few acceptable topics for interviews or discussions which will feature your cooperative and its activities. Emphasize the size of your membership, and the leading role your members play in the community. Emphasize, too, the importance to the whole community of the service you furnish.

4. Study station programing in your area. Pick those programs which you feel would be of interest to your members, and mention and describe those programs briefly in your newsletter, bulletin, or other special announcements. Then be sure to send marked copies of these announcements to station managers and program directors, with cordial letters assuring them of your interest and cooperation in

Working with young people and youth groups is not only an invaluable public relations instrument but it also spreads information on the best ways of using electricity and helps train co-op members of the future. Jackson Electric Membership Corporation at Jefferson, Georgia, is one of many cooperatives deeply involved in this kind of work. Each year, working with the numerous 4-H Clubs and chapters of Future Farmers of America located in its eight-county area, it selects an "Outstanding Young Farmer," who receives an appropriate award. The cooperative's director of member education and public relations, E. E. Thurmond, also directs an annual Youth Electric Project for younger people. The cooperative's home service advisor, Mrs. Evelyn Harris, visits schools where she works with home economics classes; each of these classes spends a full day, once a year, at the co-op, where Mrs. Harris gives instruction on the use of electricity in home freezing, laundering, cooking, care of clothing and home lighting.

*their* activities. Station management will appreciate this thoughtful and voluntary audience-building cooperation on your part, but it's up to you to see to it that the station management *gets the word*.

5. Try to arrange for the activities of your cooperative to be mentioned or elaborated upon *on a regularly scheduled program* at least once a week. The repetitive mention of your co-op and its activities, even if brief, has a cumulative impact on listeners or viewers, and motivates them to accept your cooperative as an established and essential organization in the community.

6. When cooperative directors, staff, or members participate in broadcasts or television appearances, see that they arrive at the station comfortably ahead of time; that they know precisely what is expected of them; and that they are fully prepared to put on a good show.

7. If the program format will permit, you might request the program director to have the announcer offer to send follow-up literature about your cooperative and its program to any listeners or viewers who request it.

8. Interviews, panel discussions, round tables, and forums on educational or community improvement subjects are effective vehicles for telling the cooperative story via radio or television. You may initiate some of these, participate in others. Some suitable themes might be suggestions for the use of electricity in the home, on the farm, and in rural areas; how your cooperative is contributing to rural area development; the proper care and use of electrical appliances and equipment; safety measures and hazards; improved farming methods through the use of electricity, etc. These and other likely subjects may be explored with county agents, home demonstration agents, public health officers, teachers, and others interested in farm, rural area, and community development.



*Radio broadcasts require no props.*

9. If you plan to have an out-of-town speaker address one of your meetings and the meeting itself cannot be broadcast or televised, you still may arrange for your guest speaker to be interviewed at the studio either before or after his appearance at your meeting. If you are successful, see to it that advance word gets to your membership and around the area.

10. On the news level, radio and television stations will be interested in announcements of local meetings and special projects of interest to the area, anticipated outages for repairs or maintenance on any section of your system, storm damage to lines, approval of REA loans, cooperative participation (either through Section Five loans or otherwise) in community enterprises, and the expansion or improvement of your system and service.

In the effective use of radio and TV, one point is absolutely paramount: **SIMPLICITY OF MESSAGE**. Regardless of the complexity or range of your program, try to develop a few simple, basic, and positive thoughts about your cooperative and its activities which can be expressed in pithy sentences. Then see to it that these simple, positive thoughts are dropped into your programs at every opportunity. "Cooperatives are private enterprise serving the



people who own them" is an example.

In most rural areas radio time can be purchased quite reasonably. Even a single cooperative can afford to buy one-minute advertising spots, put on brief programs itself, or sponsor news or other types of programs.

The Jackson Electric Membership Corporation at Jefferson, Georgia, features, on the first Wednesday of each month, its home service advisor in a 15-minute radio program. She gives news of the cooperative's activities, plays tapes of meetings, and conducts interviews with leading people in the communities the co-op serves.

In order to reduce costs to the

individual cooperative, and to engage in year-long programming, cooperatives often band together and purchase radio time jointly. For instance, in eastern Iowa, 12 rural electric cooperatives have joined together to sponsor University of Iowa football and basketball games, State basketball tournaments, and a radio show three times a week. In central Iowa, 8 cooperatives served by the Central Iowa Power Cooperative have formed a similar group.

Television time is more expensive, but costs can be reduced in the same fashion. In Wisconsin, 30 cooperatives pooled their funds recently to purchase a series of spot announcements to publicize "Co-op Month."

## Publications

Publications of many sorts—booklets, brochures, pamphlets, leaflets, special reports—devoted to a wide variety of subjects are indispensable to a comprehensive and effective program of electric cooperative public relations. There are, however common fundamentals to be kept in mind.

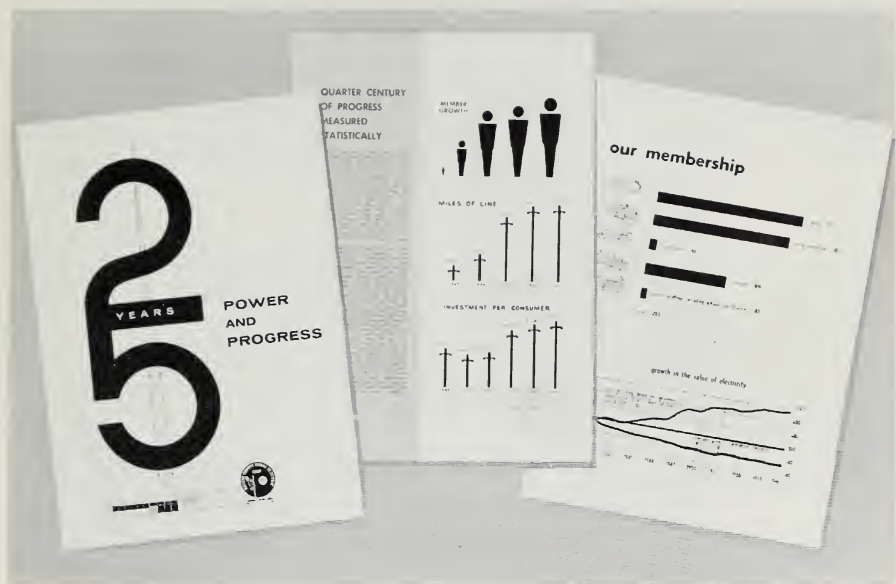
As a first rule, no matter how many publications you issue on whatever variety of subjects reflecting your cooperative and its program, be sure that each publication plainly carries the date of its issue, and the source.

Some of your publications will be designed to meet only transient needs, and may soon disappear from the scene. But others will be designed to serve longer range objectives, and may be constantly employed over considerable periods of time. When you issue a publication in any quantity you cannot possibly know the realistic limits which its distribution may reach. All of your publications will contain information.

Many of them may contain figures and statistical analyses. Material of this sort can be evaluated and used effectively by those who receive it only if the date of its currency and the source of its origin are known. An undated publication of unknown origin, coming to light a year, or two years, or five years after its issuance, may convey a completely distorted image, for the facts may have changed materially since its issuance. Under such circumstances confusion is inevitable; the danger of misinterpretation is great. So date your publications, and indicate your sponsorship of them—and that goes for your press releases as well as every other printed or mimeographed piece issued by your cooperative. By so doing you are protecting yourself and insuring the usefulness and reliability of your publications.

If you have not already done so, compile a history of your cooperative, and print or mimeograph it in quantity





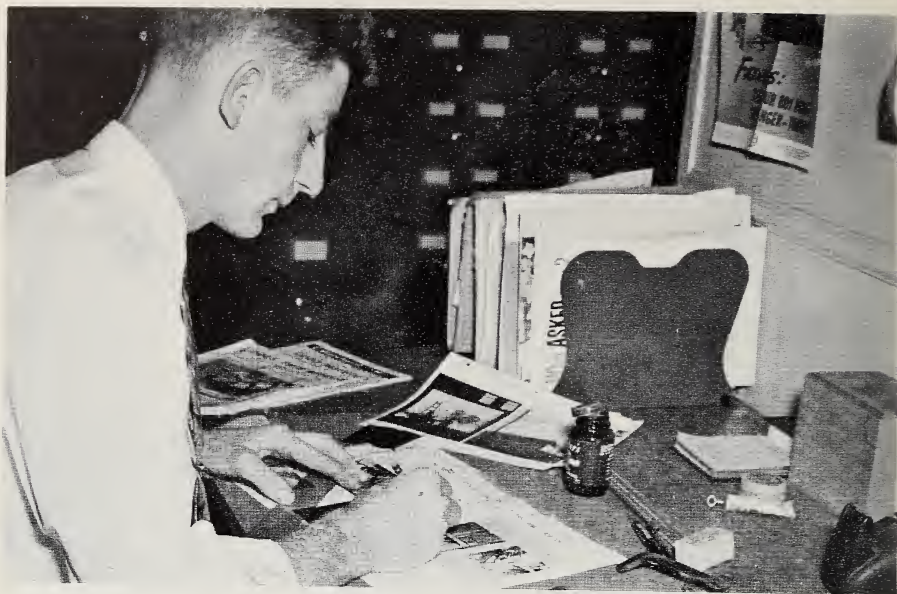
*Annual reports issued by cooperatives are showing a gratifying improvement in layout, typography, and intelligent use of diagrams and graphs. Left to right: cover of annual report issued by the Grundy County Rural Electric Cooperative at Grundy Center, Iowa; page from annual report of Cass County Electric Cooperative at Kindred, North Dakota; page from annual report of Vermont Electric Cooperative, Johnson, Vermont.*

so that it can achieve the broadest possible circulation. Provide, also, for the periodic updating of this document.

Almost every cooperative sprang from the fruitless efforts of farmers and rural residents to get central station electric service, when the commercial suppliers turned a deaf ear to their needs and pleas. These early cooperative struggles were carried forward by courageous men and women against bitter and often vicious opposition. They made many sacrifices in order that your cooperative could become the strong service organization it is today. This is a story which will bear telling again and again.

Your new members, especially, need to know this story so that they do not take the cooperative for granted (as many of them will be prone to do) but realize that it sprang from human

frustration and determination; was born of sacrifice and hard, unselfish work on the part of individuals; and still has an abiding need of these inspirational values and this crusading spirit. The co-op story is a story of proud courage and indomitable determination. Man doesn't live by bread alone, nor do electric co-ops. Your cooperative job has just begun. If you are to meet the challenges of the present and the future fully, you have desperate need of the understanding, the faith, and the support of members and non-members alike. A well prepared history of your cooperative, spelling out the realities and exposing the speciousness of the attacks leveled against you, can play a most important role in your continuing public relations effort.



*Laying out a good-looking newsletter is a difficult but fascinating job.*

There is almost no limit to the number of ideas that can be, and have been devised, to "tell the co-op story." Billboards are one effective device. Sangre De Cristo Electric Association in Colorado uses 18 road signs to let people know which power company to call to cut off power in case of damage or accidents. In other States, such as Texas, South Carolina and Georgia, scores of billboards have been placed beside major roads by groups of cooperatives.

A popular scheme to emphasize the economic importance of the local electric cooperative to the economy of the area is to pay salaries in silver dollars. Six Oklahoma cooperatives recently used this device. One of them—Cotton Electric Cooperative—put \$15,000 in hard cash into circulation into its community. Distributing \$2 bills is equally good, but in either case ample advance publicity is a necessity.

Public service and welfare activities are important instruments for gaining good will for a local cooperative. Each fall, before the local concert series starts in Owatonna, Minnesota, members of Steele-Waseca Cooperative Electric receive with their newsletter a 4-page leaflet describing the forthcoming programs and the types of membership that are available. The Inland Power and Light Company of Spokane, Washington, allowed its auditorium to be used for the African Violet Society's annual show. Northern Electric Cooperative Association in Minnesota permits civic groups to use its model home for their meetings. Employees of Jackson County RECC, McKee, Kentucky, have adopted the Faith Children's Home at Bear Track as their Christmas charity, and are active in obtaining contributions for the children there. Cooperative employees deliver the contributions.

# Newsletters and Statewide Publications

There is a real need for more understanding of the roles played by the local co-op newsletter and the statewide publication. I offer these thoughts as a former newsletter editor and now a statewide editor.

The newsletter is the only regular contact the cooperative has with all of its membership and, therefore, is deserving of strong emphasis—much stronger than the average co-op gives it.

But which is the more important? Which is the better read? Which is the winner in a newsletter vs. State paper contest? There is no contest! They each have their own purpose and role.

First of all, the local co-op newsletter is just that—local. It must be planned and prepared for local readership, for the co-op's very own membership. It should be produced solely for them, and prepared with that in mind.

The member expects from it local news, local photos, local features—but too often he doesn't get it.

The local newsletter must be personalized. It fails if it is cold with canned material and treated as merely "something we have to get out" each month. With that attitude a cooperative is better off without a newsletter because it is only wasting money.

A State paper is not local in the sense that a newsletter is. But it is local in that it should present State news.

The most natural coverage for a State paper is items of statewide interest—legislation, power supply, rural area development, power company fights, and so on.

However, this is not the only news a State paper should present. It rightfully should bring news of national significance to its readers.

Furthermore, it should carry lively feature stories about individual members throughout the State. The local co-op member likes to see photos and stories about his own co-op in the State paper. This cannot happen every month, but periodically it can. This gives the member-reader the "this is my paper" feeling.

Newsletters and State papers can work together, each one supplementing the other. Each takes leadership and initiative in its respective role, and by working together they are doing a more effective job of keeping members informed.

The State paper and local newsletter are in the same ring, not as opponents but as close allies, whether they are telling the story of power use, RAD, or one of many other local topics. And by being in the same ring, we will produce better publications and build stronger cooperatives.

**Ray Kuhl, editor**

*South Dakota High-Liner*





*County fairs and similar enterprises offer a splendid opportunity for rural co-operatives to use exhibits publicizing the usefulness and importance of their work. Here are some of the thousands of persons living in the vicinity of Humboldt and Dakota City, Iowa, who each year attend a home show that was made possible only because the Humboldt Rural Electric Cooperative and Corn Belt Power Cooperative made space available for it.*

## Exhibits

County fairs, State fairs, community fairs and other comparable activities attract extensive audiences for extended periods of time. They afford excellent opportunities for cooperatives to participate in community, county, or statewide activities.

A really good exhibit or display demands professional talent, and is worth it. People attend these events to be entertained as well as instructed. As a rule, the most successful exhibit will be one in which those attending the fair can participate. Provide simple electrical devices which the audience can operate—feature movement and color to gain attention—make something happen.

The exhibit should be manned at all times by someone competent to answer all questions about the cooperative. Use of a public address unit will make the exhibit more effective. Literature should be available for distribution.

Small exhibits for store windows or classrooms are in a different category. While they cannot be manned for a month at a time, they can be automated—lights flashing to indicate the features of an electrified farm; miniature trains operating, etc. Since exhibits are apt to be expensive, several cooperatives may find it useful to join together in creating one, and share its use in their respective areas.

The use of exhibits in the lobby of your own headquarters building should not be overlooked. They can cover a multitude of subjects, ranging from points on how to use electricity more effectively to an explanation of how rates are set.

In conclusion: public relations is an around-the-calendar challenge. The key to it is this:

*Tell the right story to the right people, and keep telling it.*



# Notes on New and Revised Bulletins

*(Copies of these publications are sent automatically to each electric and telephone borrowers as they are issued. Directors and others interested in seeing single copies may obtain them without charge by writing the Rural Electrification Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. Also available are current lists of all REA telephone and electric publications.)*

## NEW BULLETINS

345-28 (1/22/63), "REA Specification for Seven Wire Galvanized Steel Strand (PE-37)." Describes REA minimum requirements for seven wire galvanized steel strand.

345-29 (1/30/63), "REA Specification for Figure 8 Cable (PE-28)." Describes REA minimum requirements for figure 8 cable.

## REVISED BULLETINS

81-9 (1/25/63), "Preparation of Plans and Specifications for Distribution and Transmission Facilities of Distribution Type Borrowers." Brings the existing bulletin into agreement with provisions of revised REA Form 830, Electric System Construction Contract, and limits applicability of bulletin to distribution type borrowers.

345-13 (2/6/63), "REA Specification for Fully Color-Coded, Polyethylene-Insulated, Polyethylene-Jacketed Telephone Cables (PE-22)." Reflects changes in REA minimum requirements for fully color-coded, polyethylene-insulated, polyethylene-jacketed telephone cables.

345-14 (2/6/63), "REA Specification for Fully Color-Coded, Polyethylene-Insulated, Double Polyethylene-Jacketed Telephone Cables for Direct Burial (PE-23)." Reflects changes in REA minimum requirements for fully color-coded, polyethylene-insulated, double polyethylene-jacketed telephone cables for direct burial.

## SUPPLEMENTS AND PARTIAL REVISIONS TO REA BULLETINS

344-2 (December 1962), "List of Material Acceptable for Use on Telephone Systems of REA Borrowers." Brings the 1962 basic list of materials up-to-date.

40-8 (1/4/63), "Construction Specifications, Drawings and Contract Forms for Distribution and Transmission Facilities." Announces a new contract form for use in constructing transmission facilities (REA Form 831) and the revision of REA Form 805, Specifications and Drawings for Transmission Voltages.

383-1 (1/25/63), "Preparation of Telephone System Plans and Specifications for Construction of Outside Plant." Provides a new addendum to REA Form 511, Telephone System Construction Contract, to include figure 8 construction practices in the contract and specifications.

169-11 (1/28/63), "Watthour Meter Maintenance." Transmits policies established by Westinghouse Electric Corporation relating to the replacement and repair of their Series D watthour meters and dry type instrument transformers, which may have been purchased by REA borrowers.

## THE 1964 WHEAT PROGRAM

Unless two-thirds of U. S. wheat growers voting in the national wheat referendum to be held this spring are in favor of wheat marketing quotas, the new wheat marketing certificate program will be killed for 1964.

What are the facts?

1. A "yes" vote would limit production of wheat to market and export needs.
2. A "yes" vote would provide for price support at \$2 a bushel, national average, on the amount of wheat used for food, and for most wheat for export. This wheat would be sold with a certificate. Non-certificate wheat would be eligible for price support at about \$1.30 a bushel, close to the world price level and the current value of wheat as livestock feed.

3. A "yes" vote would mean farmers could earn diversion payments for wheat acreage they took out of wheat production and put into conserving uses.

On the other hand, if more than one-third of the wheat growers voting in the referendum vote "no," these facts would apply:

1. For 1964, acreage allotments would remain in effect, but there would be no quota penalty for overplanting—in effect, no limitation on production.

2. There would be no limitation on marketing of wheat. Under the law, price support would automatically drop to 50 percent of parity—about \$1.25 a bushel—and would be available only to those growers who stayed within their acreage allotments.

3. There would be no diversion payments.

Every wheat grower in America has a stake in the referendum. The outcome will affect his income and, probably, his future operations as a wheat producer.

